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FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4747

RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0896

UNCLAS ANTANANARIVO 000442

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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ADDIS FOR AMBASSADOR COURVILLE

DEPT FOR AF/E AND AF/FO

DEPT FOR DS/IP/AF/E RMEDRANO

PARIS FOR D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Anjouan's Bacar Clings To Power

REF: ANTAN 438 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) Press reports that (former) Anjouan Island "governor" Bacar has accepted the Constitutional Court's decision for him to step down remain unconfirmed. Post Comoros Liaison indicates that Bacar stated he would resign - on the condition that he, not Union President Sambi, name the interim island president. Union President Sambi's selection for interim island president, Houmadi Kaambi, has not yet been allowed to take office. Sambi is meeting late May 7 with the African Union and resident Ambassadors to discuss possible resolutions to the crisis. At present, Comoros is calm and fighting has ceased.

¶2. (SBU) Over the weekend, African Union envoy Jose Francisco Madeira led a diplomatic corps mission including the South African and French Ambassadors to Anjouan. The delegation met with former "governor" Bacar, but did not convince him to step down. The charter plane carrying the diplomats took President Sambi's wife and several family members back to Grand Comore, at Bacar's request, for their safety.

¶3. (SBU) Following last week's fighting (Reftel), Anjouan is calm May 7. President Sambi changed several military leadership positions, moving Lieutenant Colonel Mohamed Amiri Salimou into command of the National Development Army. Former Chief of Staff Hamza is being held by the Gendarmerie in Moroni for several allegations that he used his command to undermine Union force attempts to take control of Anjouan. Hamza is accused of deliberately sabotaging the Union forces and allowing Bacar loyalists to retake control in Anjouan. As of May 7, two Union soldiers have been killed in fighting and up to 20 Union soldiers are still held by Bacar in Anjouan.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Given the Constitutional Court ruled Bacar must step down and that President Sambi should name the interim, Post views Bacar's actions as delay tactics. He has enriched himself in myriad illicit dealings running Anjouan and fears prosecution if he gives up power. Sambi continues to press the international community, including the United States, to help him oust Bacar. Post has also learned that possible exile for Bacar is being discussed, though no country has stepped forward to offer him a place to retire. END COMMENT.

MCGEE